



A Review Of Magic Mistakes From The BACP Journal

Magic mistakes

Belinda Blecher, illustrated by Lisa Allen

“Every so often, I come across a book that I think could be a game changer for some of the children I work with. Having originally begun my career in early years education, both as a practitioner and lecturer, and now working as a primary school-based counsellor, I find that using children’s literature can be an invaluable tool. If a book resonates with a child, it provides the perfect opportunity for opening up a dialogue, especially for the more reluctant conversationalist or those who find talking about emotions difficult.

Magic Mistakes, written by a child and adolescent psychologist, tackles the issue of taking risks, being OK with making mistakes and accepting that no-one can be perfect all of the time. The book, which is written in rhyme, accompanied by lovely illustrations, draws you into the angst of the central character Frankie Lane from the get-go. Frankie will not take any risks for fear of making a mistake, so when confronted with a task that takes her out of her comfort zone, she is filled with dread. We have probably all experienced similar, and the feelings associated with that are highlighted in the story in a child-friendly and relatable way.

In contrast to Frankie’s character, we are introduced to her friend Tallulah Flare, who is the friend every child would want. She is comfortable in her own skin, individual, resilient, willing to have a go and feels OK about making mistakes. Tallulah teaches Frankie that risks are worth taking, because even if things go wrong, you can learn from the experience and, more importantly, turn the mistake into something positive – the Magic Mistake of the title.

The central message of this book is that children’s mistakes should never be viewed as failures but as part of learning. Giving children permission to take risks is important to both their emotional and physical health. Taking a risk can be exhilarating, as long as it is within the realms of a safe environment and can aid the development of confidence, persistence and resilience. As adults, we often want to shield and protect children, but I think the book is an important reminder that while I am there to support, comfort, guide and listen to the children I work with, I also need to let them take risks and try to figure things out for themselves. If we, as practitioners, can guide children to reflect upon what went wrong, or what they learnt from their mistakes, we can encourage them to view mistakes in a more positive way. The child is

ultimately responsible for their own self-construction, and this book is a reminder that taking a risk and making a mistake are all part of that development.”

- Lauren Langham (MBACP), primary school counsellor